DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 040 SO 013 110

AUTHOR Kolar, Walter W.
TITLE Bulgarians: Arts and Crafts.
INSTITUTION Duquesne Univ., Pittsburgh, Pa. Tamburitzans Inst. of Folk Arts.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Ethnic Heritage Studies Branch.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 27p.: For a listing of related documents, see SO 013 103. Photographs may not reproduce clearly from EDRS in microfiche.
AVAILABLE FROM Duquesne University, Tamburitzans Institute of Folk Arts, 1801 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15219 ($3.00).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Architecture: *Art Products: Carpeting: Ceramics: Clothing: Cultural Awareness: Design Crafts: Elementary Secondary Education: *Ethnic Studies: *Folk Culture: *Handicrafts: Metal Working: Units of Study: Woodworking
IDENTIFIERS *Bulgaria: Ethnic Heritage Studies Program

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a general survey of Bulgarian folk handicrafts. It is part of an ethnic heritage teaching unit on Bulgarian culture. The objective of the project is to help American students in elementary, junior high, and high schools understand and appreciate Bulgarians and their culture. Arts and crafts discussed in the paper are masks, pottery, ceramics, metalware, woodcarving, embroidery, architecture, rugs and carpets, costume ornaments, icons, decorative bread, and decorated Easter eggs. For each handicraft, information is presented on background, typical shapes and colors, typical subjects, designs and patterns, uses, construction, regional variations, connection with religious or ceremonial celebrations, and transmission of craft techniques from one generation to another. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Walter W. Kolar
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED198040

SO 013 110

BULGARIANS

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Prepared by

WALTER W. KOLAR

Published by

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY TAMBURITZANS
INSTITUTE OF FOLK ARTS

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

1979

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	
MASKS	6
POTTERY - CERAMICS	8
METALWARE	10
WOODCARVING	12
EMBROIDERY	14
ARCHITECTURE	16
RUGS AND CARPETS	18
COSTUME ORNAMENTS	20
ICONS	22
OTHER ARTS AND CRAFTS	24

made possible through a grant from
THE DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

Ethnic Heritage Studies Program

MASKS

Masks have been used in the performance of certain Bulgarian customs and rituals for many centuries. The three main types of customs and rituals using masks are centered around ceremonies called KUKERI, STARTSI, and SURVAKARI.

All three of these ceremonies are performed only by men, generally older. In recent years, young boys have begun to take part in these customs.

KUKERI. This name is used for the male ritual performed during the week before Lent. All of the participants wear masks. The main feature is the final plowing and sowing ceremony.

STARTSI. This term is also used to indicate a male masked ritual which takes place during the week before Lent. "Startsi" are old men and/or grandfathers. In this ceremony no plowing or sowing performance takes place.

SURVAKARI. This is the name used for the male masked custom which is performed during the period between Christmas and Epiphany. During this custom the traditional New Year blessing "Green and merry year, safe and sound till the next year" is commonly heard.

There is a strong similarity between the masked rituals of Bulgaria and the Mardi Gras Carnival which takes place in New Orleans each year.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, unknown talents from among the common people have handed down their art from generation to generation. This art was often connected with the everyday life and culture of the Bulgarian people, with their trade and occupation, with their clothes, jewelry, their homes, and their utensils. These arts and crafts reveal the artistic skill of the ordinary people, the shepherd, the craftsman, and the hardworking Bulgarian woman.

Peaceful subjects dominate Bulgarian folk art, depicting flowers in the garden, the trees in a wood, corn in a field, birds in the sky, or human figures dancing folk dances.

The shapes of the objects are usually simple, with pure clean lines. There are bright patterns in carpets and embroideries, and even in the home of the Bulgarian. Every carpet or part of a national costume is a complete work of art. There exsists a wealth of patterns, an amazing variety of ornaments and an almost perfect workmanship.

For centuries, embroidery has been the favorite home occupation of Bulgarian women. Such embroidery has always found great admiration - in the past as well as today.

No matter in what form the arts and crafts are found, whether it is metal, wood, ceramic, textile, stone - or whatever - they are a genuine moving expression of the aesthetic needs of the Bulgarian people.

POTTERY - CERAMICS

Bulgarian pottery is an important and distinct part of the nation's traditional material culture and national art. This tradition goes back to the very beginning of the Bulgarian nation.

These ceramic articles are used, for the most part, as household utensils. These objects are also in great demand as decorations for home.

By tradition, great importance is given to the shape of the vessel, even when there is little, or no, decoration.

Many pieces of pottery have the natural color of baked clay, without decoration. An old and favorite type of ornament are the etched lines and designs done on mineral paints. There are colored glazes, mostly green, yellow and brown which are popular. Ornaments are also produced by scratching the not-quite-dry top layer of the vessel wall with a pointed instrument. After baking, these lines turned the red color of the baking clay.

The art of pottery is closely linked with the daily life of the Bulgarian people. The Troyan district is today's leading pottery center.

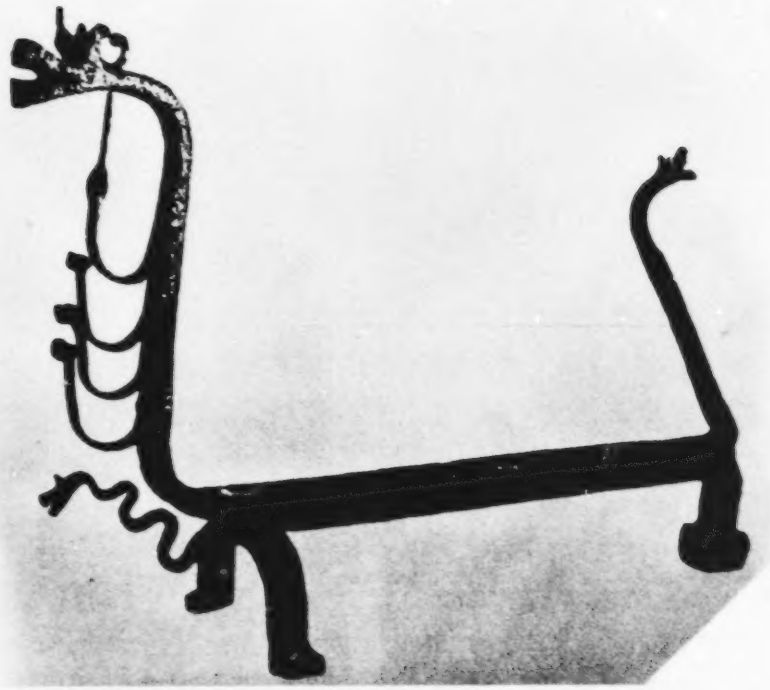
METALWARE

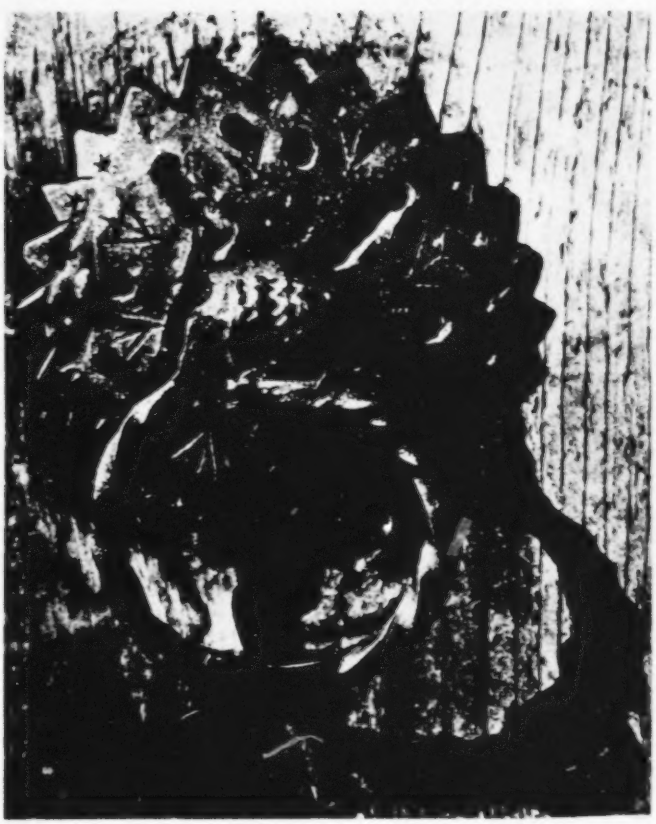
Metal art occupies an important place in the artistic heritage of the Bulgarians. There is rich diversity created by a thousand unknown masters.

This metal art is created from copper, iron, gold, silver and other various items. There are many functional pieces such as baking dishes, trays, jugs, coffee pots, church vessels, and many other items, some with pure and simple shapes, others with engraved geometrical and floral ornaments.

With their love for the beautiful, craftsmen forged iron objects such as door handles, locks, hinges, all kinds of gratings, all offering a touch to various architectural details of dwellings and churches.

The most important thing about these metal objects was that they must serve some practical purpose in ordinary, everyday living, or some similarly important and practical function in the performance of religious and ceremonial events. Very close in importance to the practical and functional, is the artistic and ornamental element of the metal object. Great stress was placed on its beauty and high artistic value.





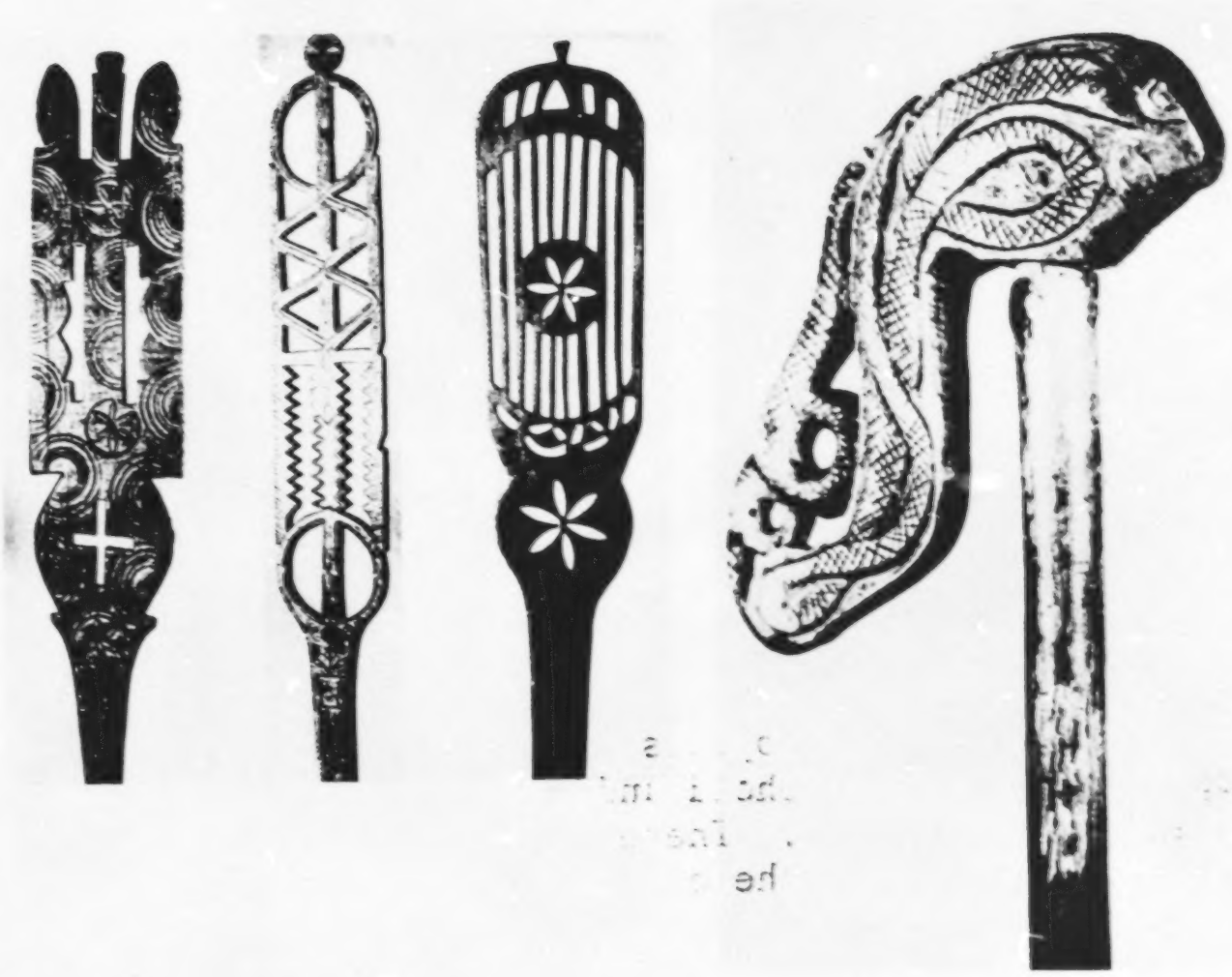
WOOD-CARVING ART

Bulgarians are proud of their wood carvings. The wealth of patterns, the amazing variety of ornaments and excellent workmanship raise wood carving to great artistic heights.

This can be seen in the shepherds' staff, bowls and drinking cups, distaffs, as well as in the house with wonderful closets, decorated doors and finely ornamented ceilings.

Almost all wooden objects which surround Bulgarian people and their household and labor needs are decorated in some manner. These decorative patterns are strongly linked with the oldest traditions of Bulgarian national arts.

Exquisite patterns of this woodcarving art are to be found in the architectural decorations of many Bulgarian homes, churches and monasteries. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this interior decoration is the wood-carved ceiling. This decoration of the ceiling was, almost always, illustrated by the idea of the sun as the symbol of life, and the belief in the happy and bright future.



EMBROIDERY

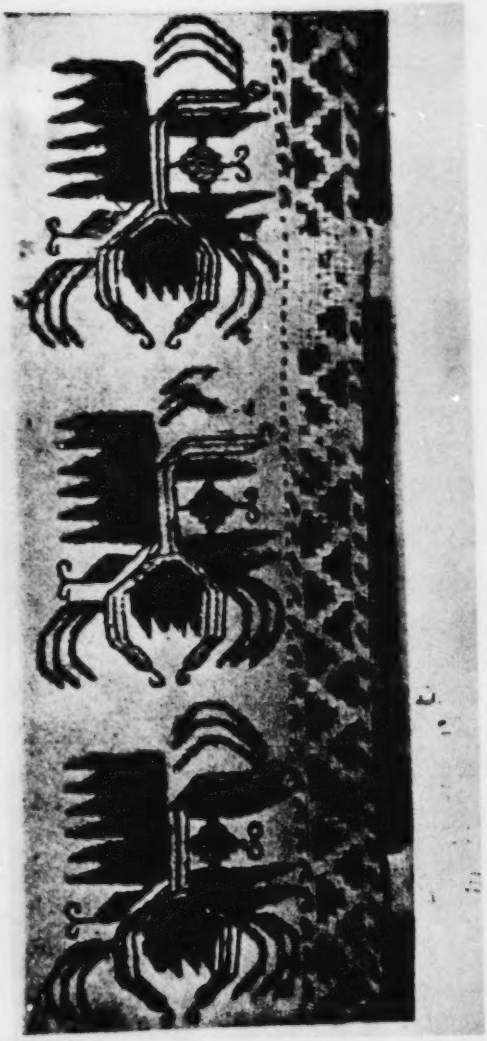
The use of embroidery in Bulgaria is an age-old tradition. The Bulgarian woman, who normally creates embroideries, is a master of making beautiful patterns and designs.

Embroideries are used on any piece of cloth which is intended to be displayed. This embroidery may be a part of such everyday items as tablecloths, curtains, pillowcases, bedspreads or decorative pieces for furniture.

A very important use for embroidery is with the national costumes of the people. Here, embroidery is utilized on hems of a chemise, jacket, coat, head-covering and in stockings. It is placed on the front and sleeves of shirts and blouses, and on the backs of such items of clothing - particularly if they will be seen. Perhaps one of the most embroidered pieces of the national costume is the apron, which is often a prized possession of the woman wearing it.

The designs and patterns of the embroideries will vary greatly from region to region, from village to village, from town to country, from the plains area to the mountains, from warmer climates to the colder ones. However, the plant and geometrical motifs are generally the most preferred. Sometimes animal and human figures will be found.

Throughout all of Bulgaria, it is a red color which predominates in all of the coloring used in Bulgarian embroidery.



ARCHITECTURE

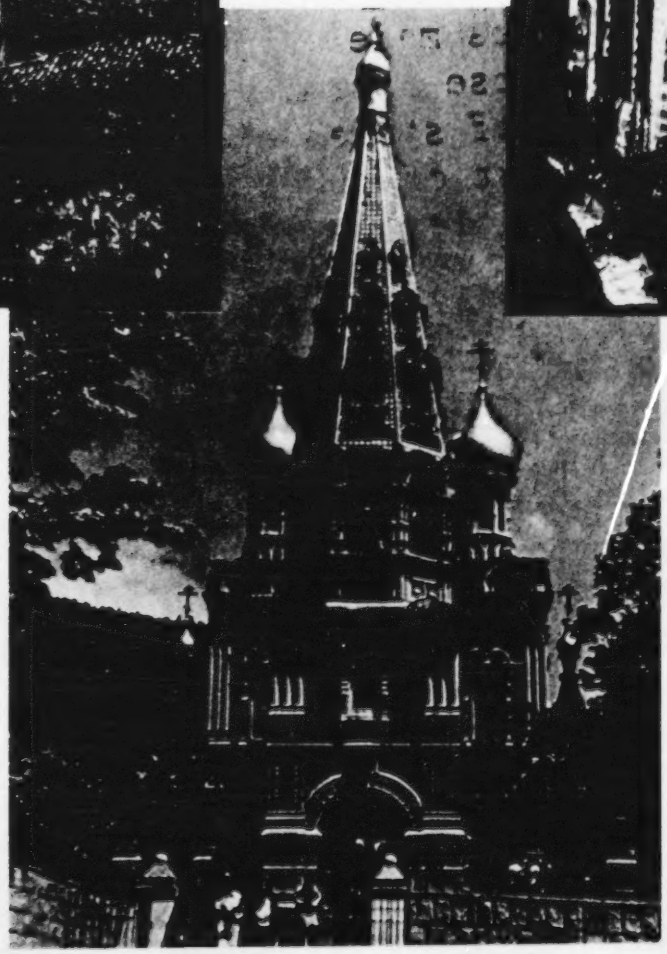
Many were the peoples and tribes in history who passed through the lands of present-day Bulgaria. There was the original culture of the Thracians which was somewhat influenced by the Greek colonies. Then came the Roman and Byzantine periods which left behind the greatest number of monuments, castles, villas, mosaics, aqueducts, roads, churches and even whole towns. Then came the Turks with 500 years of their own influence.

Throughout all of this, somehow, the old Bulgarian culture also made its own contribution and, as if through some miracle, much of these architectural wonders are still preserved to this very day.

There are some houses made of wood, particularly if the location was close to some forested area. Many houses were made of stone and stucco, a kind of cement or plaster. Most of these houses have the familiar European red-tiled roof as the topping to whatever form the house was built.

Monasteries exist in great abundance throughout the land. Perhaps the most famous is the Rila Monastery which is hidden away in the Rila Mountains in south-western Bulgaria.

Today, there are many towns and villages in Bulgaria which are preserved as national monuments, much like the American town of Williamsburg. Some of these villages and towns are Koprivshtitsa, Melnik, Veliko Turnovo, Nessebur, Bozhentsi and Plovdiv.



RUGS AND CARPETS

The weaving of rugs is a long standing tradition in Bulgaria. In some of the mountainous areas, almost every house has at least one weaver who makes rugs of varied colors and patterns.

Most of the rugs are made of sheep's wool and can be colored red, blue, green, yellow or made into patterns. The skill of rug weaving has been handed down from generation to generation, each learning from the experience of every original weaver.

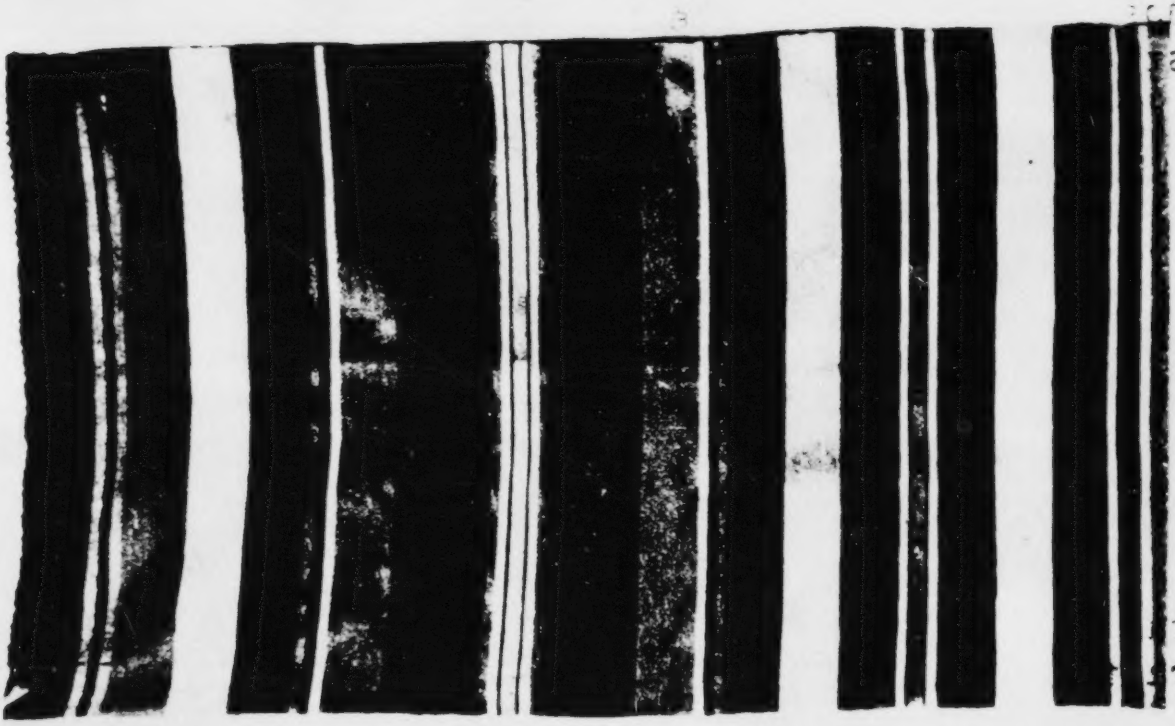
Most rugs in Bulgaria carry the name of "kilim" or "cherga." While they seem to be alike at first glance, a closer look reveals differences.

KILIM. This is generally a fine carpet and usually larger than the cherga. The wool of the sheep is used and the technique of weaving is of the finest quality. The ornamentation is often very elaborate and thus it is most often used in the best room of the house, or the guest room.

CHERGA. This is also a rug made of sheep's wool. It is usually somewhat smaller in size and not quite as ornamented, and thus, it is most often used in the "everyday" rooms of the house.

KILIMENA CHERGA. This term refers to a rug which is not as fine as a kilim, but does have some of the finer ornamentation in it.

Carpets woven in the town of Chiprovtsi usually have floral motifs while rugs woven in the town of Kotel have characteristic geometric patterns.



COSTUME ORNAMENTS

There is a great variety of ornaments which go together with the traditional national costumes of the Bulgarian people. As in the world over, these ornaments are used by both men and women as decorative pieces adding to the beauty of their costumes.

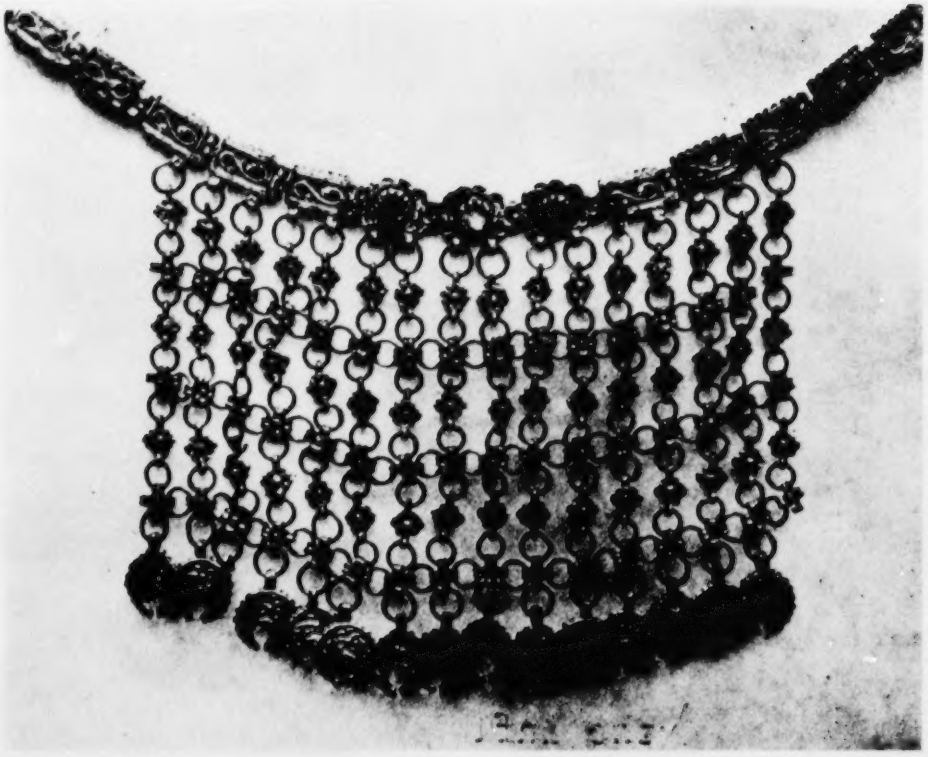
The metal ornaments that form a part of the national costumes are either round in shape, of one piece and rather heavy, or in the form of chains, made up of plates or pieces of various shapes and sizes.

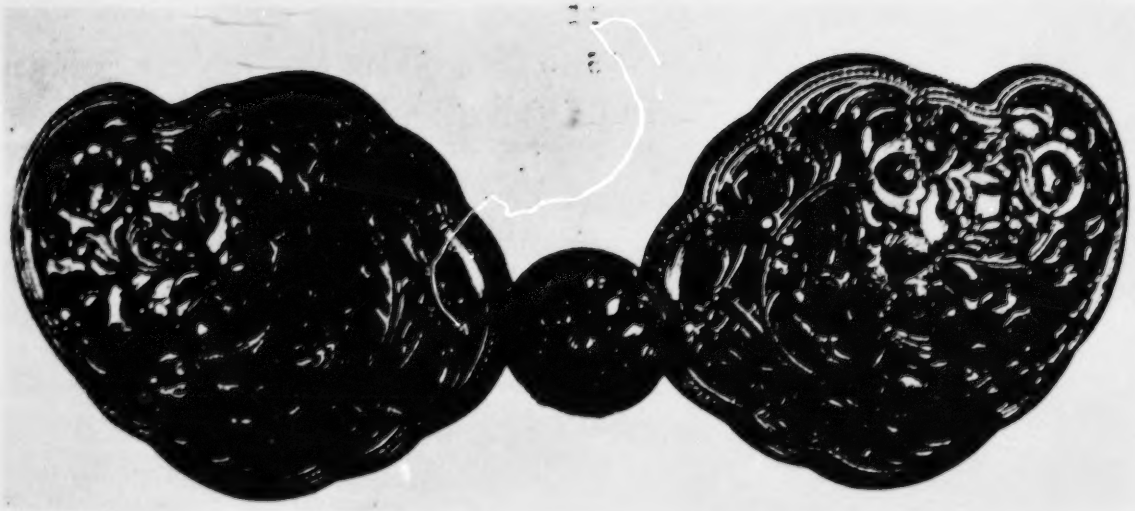
Some of these are inherited from the art of ancient Thrace and the Slavs while others have their parallels among the remnants of ancient Troy. Others show a mixture of elements with the influences from differnt Western styles. All of these ornaments, however, are works of Bulgarian craftsmen and are typical of Bulgarian applied art.

The variety of ornaments is considerable: pins, earrings, chin-pieces, strings of beads, plates joined together, belts of metal joints strung together on a leather strip, belt-buckles, bracelets, rings and many other assorted decorative pieces.

For special occasions ornaments often prepared from materials taken straight from nature such as flowers, twigs, dried fruit, feathers are added to the national costumes, which though not lasting always have a highly artistic effect.

Whatever the ornament, it is always used to add to the beauty of the wearer of the national costume and offers concrete expression of a high artistic culture.





ICONS

The word "Icon" comes from the Greek word for image. It generally refers to a panel painting of one or more sacred personages such as Christ, the Virgin Mary, or any number of Saints. The icon is especially venerated in the ORTHODOX church.

Christianity as a religion was first officially adopted by the Bulgarians in the year 865. Almost immediately the art of making icons came into being. One very early such icon is the ceramic icon of St. Theodore (9th-10th century). This was placed on the wall of the church of the monastery at Patleina near the town of Preslav. It represents the oldest style of Bulgarian ecclesiastical art.

Another famous icon is the mosaic of the Virgin Platytera (13th - 14th century) from the church of St. George in the town of Eregli. Its classical silhouette and wonderful proportions make it a rare example of Balkan mediaeval art.

Icons are found throughout the entire world, wherever there are Orthodox churches. Many such Orthodox churches exsist in the United States and each has its own collection of icons.

Also in Orthodox Christian churches there is a highly decorated, or ornamented, screen which separates the choir, or sanctuary, from the nave, or main center aisle of the church. This screen is called an "Iconostasis."

SOME OTHER FORMS OF ARTS AND CRAFTS

There is a great variety of art forms and hand crafted items which exist in the everyday life of the Bulgarian people. Some of these exist outside of what we might consider to be the mainstream of Bulgarian arts and crafts.

For example, loaves of bread are baked for various occasions and rituals, each with decorations which might reflect the joys and sorrows of the maker. The Bulgarians have a tradition of welcoming their guests with open heart and a loaf of bread.

The coloring and painting of designs on Easter eggs is another long standing tradition with the Bulgarian people. Usual designs are flowers and birds, and the Easter greeting "Hristos Voskrese" (Christ is risen) is shared with friends and loved ones.

Martenitsi are symbolic figures made of twisted red and white woolen threads. People make martenitsi and give them to their friends and relatives to wish them much health and happiness. These martenitsi are then worn on March 1st; if not, "Baba Marta" (Grandmother March) will make them ugly.

The art of carving figures and events on stone walls and monuments has been with the Bulgarian people since the earliest ages. Some of these have been around since Thracian, Greek and Roman times.

25

BULGARIA
ROMANIA
NORTH WEST
BULGARIA
NORTH BULGARIA
DOBRUDZHA
BLACK SEA
Balkan Mountains
YUGOSLAVIA
SHOPE
WESTERN
THRACE
EASTERN
THRACE
STRANDZHA
PIRIN
RHODOPES
TURKEY
GREECE
България